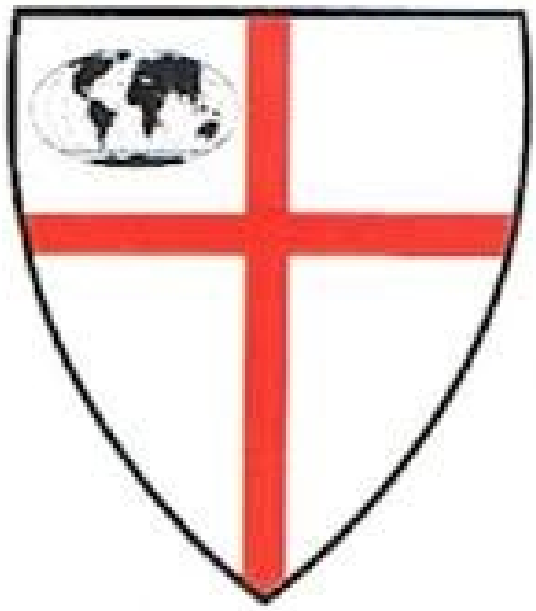
Tempest

Anglican Church International



By

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael W. Holland, Ph.D. LPC-S, LADAC, AADC, CCDP-D, IAADC, ICCDP-D

Founding Bishop
Anglican Church International

Owner
Holland Counseling of the Ozarks, LLC

Abstract

In Matthew 14:22–33, Peter is called out of the boat into a storm on the Sea of Galilee and begins to sink the moment he turns his attention from Christ back onto himself. In 1 Kings 19:9–18, Elijah encounters wind, earthquake, and fire at Horeb, and hears God not in any of them but in the sound of sheer silence after the storm has passed. This reflection on the lections for Trinity X / Proper 14 offers faith as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace: God's unconditional love for us in and through Christ, from which nothing in all creation can separate us. Stepping out of the boat to serve others, even into stormy seas, is what that faith looks like when it becomes an act; losing focus on Christ is what makes us sink; calling out is what makes us lifted by Christ through others in the Unity of His Holy Spirit. Faith, so understood, is what makes our being Christ's hands, voice, and heart in the world possible.

Abstract drafted by Perplexity Computer at the author's direction, 10 August 2026, and reviewed by the author.

Tempest

Over the past several weeks I have emphasized our mission, our ministry, the ministry of the Church, which is to bring the kingdom of God to all we encounter by serving others as Christ serves us. We have discovered what it is to be others sure foundation and the results of so doing, namely, nothing short of a miracle, the feeding of the five thousand. The feeding of the 5,000 not counting women and children was made possible by those present turning from being concerned with self to being concerned with others, through Christ, serving others as their sure foundation as Christ is our sure foundation. From waiting for Christ literally to provide food – there seemed not to be enough to feed those present – to following His example via. The example of His disciples of being others foundation and discovering there is more than enough to feed all present. And God's love for His creation through Christ and thus the kingdom of God is brought to and made known to all present.

And we have an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, the grace of God's love for us in Christ which is in each of us; and, as we have found Saint Paul states , cannot be separated from us. Not by "hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword … death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation …."

Our Gospel reading for today reminds me of part of a verse from one of my favorite songs "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald"– "Does anyone know where the love of God goes when the waves turn the minutes to hours?" God's love goes nowhere. Rather we separate ourselves off from feeling it, seeing

it, by serving ourselves rather than others, or, by fear of not getting our needs met when we seek to serve others as Christ serves us.

How, then, can we avoid separating ourselves off from feeling and seeing God's love for us in Christ in our lives so that we might carry out our mission, answer our call? At least part of the answer can be found in both the Old Testament and Gospel readings for today.

First we must be able to see God in through Christ at work in our lives. In the Old Testament reading we find that God often is not found in/where we might think:

> "Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him …"

I think of the storms of this year and of years past when I have seen lightning from one end of the sky to the other, thunder like I had rarely heard before, rolling across the sky, hearing the wind in the trees far off and feeling it as it blows past. I remember times when I thought it would never end. The crackling sound! And I remember the calm of silence after the storm had past. But God, we find here, is not in the thunder as we might expect. Nor is He in the lightning or the wind. He is not in what might be considered mighty acts. Rather, God is to be found in the silence, the calm after the storm.

In today's Gospel:

- We have the Disciples in a boat going to a shore as part of their ministry.

- We have them encountering a tempest that which moves them out to sea away from their course and their getting where they are going so to speak.

- We have Christ walking on water and the Disciples seeming to think he is a ghost [which, notably, continues the theme of recognizing Christ's presence in the world, in our world, our everydayness].

- We have Peter asking Jesus to empower him with the ability to fulfill his mission as well as what seems like something of a challenge, (e.g., prove you are Jesus - doubt). And we have Peter answering Christ's call to come to Him on the water – to walk on water – to leave the boat by faith, during a storm.

- We have Peter beginning to sink in the water when a wind of the storm hit him and his beginning to doubt, to worry about self; turn away from his focus, one might say, on his ministry – doubt.

- We have Peter calling out for help to Jesus and his being lifted up by He who is the savior of the world.

- And finally, we have a reminder of our dependence on God to answer our call, carry out our mission to bring the Kingdom of God to all of His creation, dependence on God working in our lives through Christ in the Unity of His Spirit in us, God in us.

Let us consider what is here for a moment. What we have is a description of our lives as the Body of Christ in the world:

- We have what happens when we move away from God in Christ, the inability to fulfill our calling, His calling, on our own. And we have the result, our moving off course.

- We have our difficulty with seeing Christ's presence in our lives and one of the sources of our difficulty, doubt.

- We have our encounter with the wind of the storm and wondering where has the love of God has gone while it is right in front of us, in our face so to speak.

- We have what can happen when we are reconciled with God in Christ, the stilling of the waters.

- And finally, we have what happens when we lose that foundation which allows us to follow Christ, we, as did Peter, sink. Again, the word here is faith.

It can be easy to answer Christ's call and serve others when we are in the safety of the boat knowing our needs will be met. We see someone else in the water and throw a life preserver out to them. It is not so easy answering Christ's call however when doing so seems to put ourselves in jeopardy, let alone in harms way – leaving the boat to walk, so to speak, on stormy seas.

Consider again the 5,000 fed. They were called upon to share what they had despite the fact that doing so seemed to entail they would not have enough to eat. The disciples, notably, had given all they had. The people could have said, wait a minute. ME FIRST! But they turned to serving others instead of themselves. They discovered, when they did this Christ provided for their needs through others. But on

what basis did they act? It could not have been reason, for reason says, there is not enough for everyone, you must eat what you have to ensure you will have enough. It must have been, then, they acted on **faith**.

Following Christ sometimes requires that we step out of our boat into what seems are stormy seas to serve others as Christ serves us. Doing so requires **faith** in God's unconditional forgiveness and love for us in and through Christ as we abide in the Unity of His Holy Spirit:

- Faith that He loves us unconditionally, that His love has not gone away.

- Faith that He, by His Grace – His Holy Spirit in us - will guide us if only we will hear His voice through others and in ourselves, and in silence, hear the voice of His Spirit guiding us.

- *Faith* that out of His unconditional love for us He, through others, will never leave us wanting.

- *Faith* that He will ensure our needs will be met wherever He calls us to go.
- *Faith* that He will keep us safe in the midst of stormy seas.

- And finally, ***FAITH*** that when we fall short in our mission of being His hands voice and heart in this world, by failing to be His hands that reach out to others who call out to us in need despite our encountering stormy seas, thus failing to be the voice that proclaims His unconditional love and forgiveness for all His creation, by virtue of our failing to believe by faith with our hearts in Him who is the savior of ALL; and, as did Peter, begin to go under, FAITH that God's unconditional

forgiveness and love for us in and through Christ has gone nowhere so that when we call out to Him in desperation, He is there through others to lift us up in the Unity of His Holy Spirit.

Stepping out of our boat to serve others, then, is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace which is **FAITH**. **Faith in God's unconditional love for us in and through Christ in us and in others being our sure foundation in the Unity of His Holy Spirit, through which He brings the Kingdom of God to all we encounter and we, His church, answer His call, and fulfill our mission.**

Alas, the hardships of the world impinge on us and we lose faith. We turn from answering His call to serve others and, believing we can go it on our own, serve ourselves thus failing to feel and see His love for us at work in our lives, and we begin to sink, to die. When we come to the point where we do not see how we can get our needs met on our own we call out and through others God in and through Christ is there and the kingdom of God, through them, is brought to us in the Unity of His Holy Spirit. And we rediscover His unconditional forgiveness and love for us in Christ is never gone. With renewed faith in Him we turn once again to answer His call and we feel and see Him again in ourselves by unconditionally serving others as He unconditionally serves us. And through us the Kingdom of God is brought to all we encounter as it was brought to us through others and we live, our actions being an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace of God's unconditional love for us in and through Christ and our **faith** in His love as we abide in His love in the Unity of His Holy Spirit. **. Faith that is the key to our lives by making our being Christ's hands, voice, and heart, in the world possibl.** ***Amen*****.**

Works Cited

The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, According to the Use of the Episcopal Church. Church Publishing, 1979.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. Thomas Nelson, 1989.

Lightfoot, Gordon. "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." *Summertime Dream*, Reprise Records, 1976.